

Terje Lohndal (ed.): *In search of universal grammar: From Old Norse to Zoque* [Linguistik Aktuell 202]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins 2013, 361 pp.

Introductory statement

This volume, edited by Terje Lohndal, is a *Festschrift* honoring the career and lasting contributions of Jan Terje Faarlund to the field of linguistics. The central theme connecting the various contributions housed in this volume involves the pursuit of a better understanding of the Faculty of Human Language, with the majority of the contributions adopting a generative perspective. The subsections of this volume reflect the rich and diverse research interests of Faarlund over the course of his +40 year research career, ranging from topics such as Scandinavian syntax, Germanic sociolinguistics, Topics in French grammar, Language change, Lesser-studied languages, Language acquisition, and Language evolution. In what follows, I present a detailed overview of the individual contributions and the volume as a whole, showing that the composite result is a high-quality contribution worthy to the task of honoring Jan Terje Faarlund and his research.

Overview of sections and individual contributions

The majority of the chapters in this edited volume provide detailed analyses of various phenomena in language families that Faarlund has studied over the course of this career. Starting with the topic of Scandinavian syntax, Tor Åfarli ('On the syntax of the accusative/dative alternation in spatial PPs in Norwegian dative dialects') presents a generative/minimalist analysis of the accusative/dative alternation for spatial PPs in a Norwegian dialect, arguing that the dative/locative type is the default condition, with the accusative/directional resulting when the spatial PP is the head of a small clause. Christer Platzack ('Spurious topic drop in Swedish') elaborates on the absence of overt subjects in (certain) finite clauses in Swedish. His proposal touches on recent work pertaining to the A/A'-movement system and suggests that topic drop requires the deletion of SpecCP. Two studies on aspects of French grammar by Hans Petter Helland ('Non-finite adjuncts in French') and Christine Meklenborg Salvesen ('Topics and the left periphery: A comparison of Old French and Modern Germanic') are included, with the former taking a closer look at non-finite gerundives in adjunct positions and the most appropriate way to analyze the

preposition *en* that proceeds the gerundive and the latter providing a comparison of the of the left periphery in Old French and Modern Germanic. Speaking briefly on Salvesen's contribution, recent work by Cognola (2013) investigates the left periphery of a German-language enclave dialect spoken in North Italy (Mòcheno) and addresses similar data and concerns in discussing the V2-properties of this dialect. Finally, two contributions exploring properties of lesser-studied languages and what these findings contribute to grammatical theory complete these contributions. Alice Harris ('Origins of metathesis') considers the process of metastasis in Batsbi and its emergence. Jerrold Saddock ('Indefinitely definite expressions') discusses interpretation preferences for bare noun phrases (i.e., those not proceeded by either a definite or indefinite article) in English and Old Norse.

In addition to studies of properties of individual languages past and present, two contributions focusing on sociolinguistic aspects of language appear in this volume. Unn Røyneland ('The voice from below': Norwegian language reforms in the 21st century) discusses Norwegian language reform in the 21st century, and makes the case that including "the voice from below", i.e., the opinions of the common population, had a profound impact on the final reforms made effective in August 2012. Peter Trudgill ('Gender maintenance and loss in Totenmålet, English, and other major Germanic varieties') looks at gender maintenance and loss in West and North Germanic, where he links social and linguistic structure as equal causes of these changes. Additional research in this domain of inquiry has been carried out by Eisel-Hendricks (2014), who investigates the maintenance and loss of gender marking in North Frisian.

Two papers that specifically address the diachronic study of language are provided by Werner Abraham ('The developmental logic of the analytic past in German and Polish: An issue of universalism or areal contact?') and Elly van Gelderen ('The diachrony of pronouns and demonstratives'). Werner Abraham surveys the emergence of the analytic past in German, and discusses the development of a similar construction in Polish. According to his research, Abraham concludes that the development of this recent Polish periphrastic past is the result of language contact with German. Elly van Gelderen's contribution looks at diachronic changes in pronouns and demonstratives, paying special attention to their development in English (Old and Middle English), while briefly discussing Scandinavian as well.

The section on language acquisition and its relevance for grammatical theory is highlighted by contributions by David Lightfoot and Marit Westergaard,

both of whom engage in a detailed overview of the study of I-language from diachronic and synchronic perspectives respectively. Lightfoot's contribution ('Doing diachrony') explicates how explanation in diachronic syntax can most effectively be achieved in a formalism that requires historical linguists to link the new, emerging I-language of various synchronic stages of a given grammatical system to the external language children are exposed to. This work feeds directly into Marit Westergaard's piece ('The acquisition of linguistic variation: Parameters vs. micro-cues'), who puts forward evidence that parameter variation in language acquisition is most consistently modeled in a system that eschews the traditional notion of 'parameter' in favor of smaller units of linguistic knowledge which she calls 'micro-cues.' According to Westergaard, adopting micro-cues as the atomic units of first language acquisition enables linguistics to hone in on the finite distinctions at the syntax-information structure interface which L1 acquirers are shown to make explicit use of. A potential criticism of this program, which Westergaard herself acknowledges (pp. 292–3) lies in the fact that although the notion of micro-cue can still be viewed as a component of some version of Universal Grammar, they are uniquely language specific, with the 'universality' of them deriving from the postulation that they are constructed from material that is universally available in the human language faculty. This approach to L1 acquisition could very well lead to exciting new endeavors and findings that could alter the way generative theorists interpret and model these universal aspects of the Faculty of Human Language.

The final section of this volume investigates different perspectives on language evolution. On the surface it may seem that the perspectives of Erika Hagelberg ('The evolution of language') and Salikoko Mufwene ('Language as technology: Some questions that evolutionary linguistics should address') are diametrically opposed to one another; however, I argue here that they are in fact complementary. Hagelberg's perspective is one that supports a largely adaptationist perspective of the development of human language and suggests that this position adduces support for a generative view of phylogenetic language acquisition. Recent work by Deacon (2012) and Stroik & Putnam (2013) and references *inter alia* have criticized this strong position, providing evidence for the internal development of genetic information that was already present in the development of organisms (including the mind). Bickerton's (2014) revised and updated discussion of the fundamental universal elements of grammar paired against elements that he argues are less structured (e.g., tense, agreement, information structure, etc.) offer a respectable compromise in light of

these criticisms of a strong version of Darwinistic adaptation (and a view that is largely consistent with the model that Westergaard advances in her earlier contribution as well). Turning to Mufwene's contribution, the call to incorporate notions of social development and cooperative function as a necessary component in the development of human language and cognition is hardly a novel claim (Everett 2012; see e.g. Tomasello 2014 for a comprehensive overview of this position). The concepts of underspecification and indeterminacy discussed in these works could be construed to include cultural considerations as a potential motivating factor for the development of linguistic structures. The shift from an exclusive ontological perspective of language acquisition to one that now must consider phylogeny has led to interesting discussions and debates where scholars from different, yet related, disciplines are engaging in these conversations. Clearly, the perspectives reflected in both of these contributions are necessary and welcome as we continue to move forward in our collective explorations.

Concluding remarks

The intent of an edited volume in honor of a scholar should strive to be an accurate reflection of this scholar's contributions to the field over the course of his/her career. The rich diversity of topics explored in this volume succeeds at the difficult task of including the various domains of linguistic inquiry that Jan Terje Faarlund has made while at the same time providing new, cutting-edge perspectives on current topics. I applaud Terje Lohndal and the contributors to this excellent volume for bringing forth a product that is truly a worthy testament to the career of this great linguist.

References

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